

THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT CONSTRUCTION

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Letters

secure in the brick, rigid connections like nails could crack the masonry horizontally near the top of the wall the frame settles, even slightly.

Bill Thibadeau
Norcross, Ga.

Rainscreen Siding Details

To the Editor:

I read Joseph Lstiburek's "Water-Managed Wall Systems" with great interest. His comment that today's #15 and #30 felts do not perform as the old-style asphalt-impregnated felts did is a condemnation of the

constant search for manufacturing things more cheaply. Several years ago, we had a similar situation with fiberglass roof shingles cracking all over the country because the industry skimped on the amount of asphalt needed to stabilize the fiberglass mats.

To prevent the problems Lstiburek describes in his article, I have specified the rainscreen (referred to by Lstiburek as "water-managed wall systems") on several houses, including my own, over the last 15 years. The results appear to be very satis-

factory: no more peeling paint, rotting walls, and splitting, curling clapboards.

I found one thing missing from Lstiburek's article: There is no mention of the need to screen the drainage spaces to keep out insects and rodents. For this, I have used GAF's Cobra Fascia Vent, a spun plastic material similar to that used for some ridge vents. It seems to be the perfect material for this application: It is 3 inches wide by 1 inch thick. It fits well between 1-by furring strips, compressing easily to fit the depth of the furring. It comes in 50-foot coils, two coils per pack. You can special-order it from building material suppliers handling GAF ventilation and roofing materials.

I wish all builders and remodelers would get on the bandwagon and install all sidings on furring strips as I see done on Canadian modular units shipped to Vermont. It's an inexpensive insurance policy that eliminates most siding callbacks and can only lead to satisfied customers.

Henri de Marne
Waitsfield, Vt.

What To Do With Vermiculite Insulation

To the Editor:

After reading your article "Vermiculite Insulation: Asbestos Threat?" (*In the News*, 3/03), I looked at a job renovating an attic and noticed that the previous builder had used vermiculite insulation. I was wondering what steps I should take to dispose of this. Also, I was wondering if there was somewhere I could send a sample to determine if it contains tremolite. Should this insulation be removed, or would covering it with fiberglass insulation be a safe alternative?

Bill Harrington
Battenkill Builders
Bennington, Vt.

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Letters

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Jon Vara responds: According to EPA field manager Jim Christiansen, who is in charge of a federal cleanup of vermiculite-containing attics in Libby, Mont., carefully covering the vermiculite with fiberglass without disturbing it will probably not raise enough dust to cause much of a hazard, but it won't make

the problem go away, either. If you're going to venture into the attic, wear a well-fitted respirator equipped with a HEPA cartridge and a disposable Tyvek suit; the homeowner should take similar precautions before going into the attic.

The only way to eliminate the problem is to have a qualified asbestos-abatement contractor come in and remove the vermiculite and confirm

that the area and the living space are free of fibers. There are well-established methods for doing that, but it's not going to be cheap. Don't try to remove the material yourself, or you're likely to spread asbestos fibers throughout the living space.

To add to the confusion, there's a serious inconsistency between law and science with regard to vermiculite. Under EPA regulations, only substances that contain more than 1% asbestos are regulated as asbestos-containing materials. Jim Christiansen notes that although an individual sample of vermiculite may contain anywhere from a nondetectable amount of asbestos up to 5% or so, a reading at or near the bottom of that range definitely does not mean that the material is safe. "The 1 percent standard was developed for things like pipe wrap, where you're talking about a solid material," he says. "The asbestos in vermiculite is so friable and becomes airborne so easily that it's hazardous even at very low levels."

Safety First, Please

To the Editor:

How many times do we safety-conscious contractors need to write in to tell you that you have a hazard on your front cover (3/03)? Safety glasses on the saw stand, not on his face! And tell me he is not making a cut with his left arm on the right side of the blade.

We pay more than \$30 per hundred paid on carpenters making less than \$22 per hour for workers' compensation. Do we really want to start using your magazine as a safety test — "What is wrong in this picture?" I would hate to not be able to attend JLC Live this year because of higher work comp rates. Your careless approach to safety affects everyone from you to the builder, costing more to the end consumer. Enough said.

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†Windload Testing is based on ASTM 5206 testing and the results are reported per ASTM 3679 Section 5.11.

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